

Economic and social development

Having listened to the presentations of the various United Nations agencies, and the various comments from indigenous organisations and Member States it is very uplifting to note a strong consensus around the notion that the Permanent Forum will have an important task in linking indigenous peoples issues to the broader development agenda.

The full inclusion of indigenous peoples and their possibility to take full part in the economic development of their countries is an absolute must. But that is of course only half the story. As numerous speakers have pointed out indigenous peoples on their side have a lot to offer too. Both donor agencies and governments in recipient countries can benefit greatly from the insights of indigenous peoples in the continued efforts to balance the different elements in development policies. Also in economic and social development a true partnership in action is needed.

As the Deputy Secretary-General reminded us yesterday, not all indigenous peoples are marginalised or economically disfavoured. However, it is also a fact that millions of indigenous peoples endure extreme poverty. The extension of the poverty problem among indigenous peoples is - for various reasons - still somewhat unclear. A suggestion to the working programme of the Forum could therefore be to include a survey or an analysis to map out the economic situation of indigenous peoples compared to other groups in the respective societies.

The future influence of the Forum on the multilateral development efforts grows directly out of the mandate of the Forum. But it is perhaps also important to consider the potential of the Forum to influence - although perhaps more indirectly - the thinking and actions of bilateral donors.

Denmark adopted a "Strategy for Support to Indigenous Peoples" in 1993. A recent review undertaken by four experts, who themselves have an indigenous background, generally gave the Danish strategy good grades. However, the review also pointed to the fact that perhaps the real challenge is not to develop good strategies, but rather how to implement them.

Both the multilateral and the bilateral donors have a role to play in support of indigenous peoples, but we can all benefit from learning from each other's experiences. The Permanent Forum offers a unique framework for facilitating such dialogue. Better common understanding of the development issues facing indigenous peoples and greater coherence between our multilateral and bilateral approaches and policies will undoubtedly benefit our common course. Therefore, Denmark will be looking forward to draw upon the experience and insights of the Forum in our continued effort to improve the quality of our bilateral development programme for indigenous peoples.